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2006-08-31

pÿ Kittilä , S T 2006 , ' The anomaly of the verb give explained by its h
pÿ semantic) transitivity ' , Linguistics , vol. 44 , no. 3 , pp. 569 612 . h

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/250882>

<https://doi.org/10.1515/LING.2006.019>

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The anomaly of the verb ‘give’ explained by its high (formal and semantic) transitivityⁱ

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Please cite this paper as: Kittilä, Seppo. (2006) The anomaly of the verb ‘give’ explained by its high (formal and semantic) transitivity. *Linguistics* 44: 569–612.

Abstract

‘Give’ is a very atypical trivalent verb in many ways. In the present paper, an explanation for this anomaly will be proposed. The goal of the paper at hand is to show that the anomaly of ‘give’ follows from its high formal transitivity, which also has a semantic basis. This means that ‘give’ shares a number of features with highly transitive two-actant clauses and thus outranks other trivalent verbs in formal transitivity in languages in which there are at least two syntactic classes of trivalent verbs. The discussed features comprise the number and marking of arguments, traits of verb morphology and verbal agreement and the application of operations like passive and dative shift. The analysis is not applicable to all languages, but the uniformity languages display in this respect cannot be a mere coincidence. After the formal analysis, some reasons that underlie the high formal transitivity of ‘give’ will be examined.

1. Introduction

‘Give’ⁱⁱ is in many ways a rather atypical trivalent verb in a number of languages. An illustrative example has been discussed in detail by Borg and Comrie (1984), who show that ‘give’ⁱⁱⁱ deviates from all other trivalent verbs in Maltese with regard to case marking, verbal cross-referencing and also in the applicability of morpho-syntactic operations such as passivization and dative shift. This discussion is highly relevant to the purposes of the present paper; some of the most important points of the discussion are therefore recapitulated in the following. First of all, the argument marking of ‘give’ is (optionally) different from other trivalent verbs (apart from ‘show’ and ‘teach’):

Maltese (Borg & Comrie 1984: 113, 121, 117)

- (1a) Xtraj-t-ilha l-ktieb lil marija
bought-I-to=her the-book to Mary
‘I bought the book for OR from Marija’

- (1b) Xtraj-t-ilha l-ktieb għal marija
bought-I-to=her the-book for Mary
‘I bought the book for Mary’

- (1c) marija ta-t /urie-t l-ittra lil pawlu
Mary gave-she /showed-she the-letter to Paul
‘Mary gave/showed the letter to Paul’

- (1d) marija ta-t-u /urie-t-u l-ittra (lit-t-tifel)
Mary gave-she-him /showed-she-him the-letter (to-the-boy)

‘Mary gave/showed the letter to him’

(1a) and (1b) illustrate the structure of ‘buy’. The Recipient argument can be preceded by *lil* as in (1a), in addition to which ‘buy’ permits the Recipient to be marked with *għal* illustrated in (1b). In this regard, it differs from ‘give’ and ‘show’, neither of which allows to be preceded by *għal*. Moreover, the verbal cross-referencing of (1a-b) is different from that of ‘give’ and ‘show’, as becomes evident if we compare (1a-b) to (1c-d). ‘Give’ and ‘show’ refer to the Recipient by a ‘non-dative’ cross-referencing affix, whereas ‘buy’ invariably cross-references the Recipient with a dative affix (with ‘give’ and ‘show’ the Recipient affix is likewise dative if all arguments appear as pronominal affixes on the verb).

In addition to the differences in argument marking, the status of the two objects^{iv} of ‘give’ and ‘show’ is different from all other trivalent verbs in that only these two verbs permit the promotion of both objects to the subject of the passive. This makes ‘teach’ different from ‘give’ and ‘show’:

Maltese (Borg & Comrie 1984: 118, 121)^v

(2a) l-ittra n-għata-t /n-t-werie-t lil pawlu
 the-letter gave-PASS-she /showed-PASS-she to Paul
 ‘The letter was given/shown to Paul’

(2b) pawlu n-għata /n-t-wera l-ittra
 Paul gave-PASS-he/showed-PASS-he the-letter

‘Paul was given/shown the letter’

- (2c) l-ilsien ingliz in-t-ghallem lil bniet u
 the-language English teach.PASS to girls and
 subien
 boys

‘The English language was taught to girls and boys’

- (2d) *il-bniet u s-subien in-t-ghallm-u l-ilsien ingliz
 the-girls and the-boys teach.PASS-them
 (The girls and boys were taught English)

As shown above, ‘give’ and ‘show’ are the only two verbs that allow the promotion of both Theme and Recipient to the subject of the passive.^{vi} Examples like (2d) are simply ungrammatical, since the promotion of the Recipient is not possible with ‘teach’ or any other verb apart from ‘show’ and ‘give’.

On the basis of the features illustrated in (1) and (2), there are two trivalent verbs in Maltese that display very different characteristics from all other verbs of similar valency. However, ‘give’ can also be distinguished from ‘show’, if we consider the verbal cross-referencing which is examined in (3):

Maltese (Borg & Comrie 1984: 120)

- (3a) urej-t-u ‘l pietru
 showed-I-him Peter
 ‘I showed him/it to Peter’

(3b) urej-t-lu 'l pietru

showed-I-to=him Peter

'I showed Peter to him'

(3c) *taj-t-lu 'l pietru

give-I-to=him Peter

(I gave Peter to him)

As noted above in connection with (1), 'give' and 'show' can be distinguished from the great majority of trivalent verbs on the basis of verbal cross-referencing. Trivalent verbs usually cross-reference the Recipient in cases like (3a) with a 'non-dative' pronominal affix. However, the two verbs differ with regard to the possibility of employing a dative affix for this purpose. 'Show' allows the variation illustrated in (3a-b) in order to resolve possible ambiguity, while this is always deemed ungrammatical with 'give'.

On the basis of the above data, there are in fact good reasons for labelling 'give' as a highly non-prototypical verb in Maltese, since 'give' is the only (trivalent) verb that displays all the features discussed above. Borg and Comrie explain the quirky morpho-syntax of 'give' in terms of the typical anomaly of very frequent verbs:

However, in many languages, including Maltese, 'give' is syntactically a very atypical ditransitive verb. This is not particularly surprising: items from the most basic vocabulary are

more likely to be anomalous morphologically and syntactically.

But this does demonstrate that more care needs to be taken in the choice of the most typical ditransitive verb, selection of ‘give’ always requiring cross-checking with a variety of other verbs of similar valency. (Borg & Comrie 1984: 123)

I fully agree with Borg and Comrie that ‘give’ is indeed a very atypical trivalent verb in Maltese (as well as other languages), since there are morpho-syntactic traits on the basis of which ‘give’ can be distinguished from all other trivalent verbs. The very frequent occurrence of ‘give’ certainly contributes to this (as also shown in Comrie 2001 and in Haspelmath: submitted). However, a different analysis, which will be pursued at length below, better explains the anomaly of ‘give’. If we take a closer look at the morpho-syntactic traits that distinguish ‘give’ from other trivalent verbs in Maltese, it is easy to see that the features in question are relevant to the notion of (formal) transitivity in general (see e.g. Hopper and Thompson 1980 among many others). These comprise differences in argument marking, passivization and verbal cross-referencing. Moreover, the relevant features make ‘give’ more transitive (formally) than other trivalent verbs (the argument marking is an exception in Maltese). This is to say that the anomalous status of ‘give’ is not due merely to its frequency; other factors make an important contribution to its formal anomaly as well. On the basis of (1)-(3), formal transitivity seems to be a very important property in this regard. In fact, as will be shown, Maltese is far from being the only language of this kind. An

explanation based on other features than mere frequency of occurrence should always be preferred if one is readily available. To suggest such an explanation is the goal of the present paper.

Since the label ‘ditransitive’ is central to the discussion in the following sections, a terminological note is in order here. In the present context, only clauses with two direct objects^{vii} are regarded as ditransitive. This comprises constructions that have two arguments, which behave in the same way as the transitive Patient in light of any of the formal features to be discussed (i.e. case marking, verb morphology etc.). The use of the label thus differs from that adopted, for example, by Blansitt (1973: 3), Sedlak (1975: 119) and Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000: 3) who regard all constructions denoting an event with a theme and a recipient as ditransitive. In the present context, constructions with three overt arguments, yet not with two direct objects, are labeled as trivalent. This comprises cases like *the president gave the book to the gardener*, where the Recipient surfaces an oblique. The term ‘trivalent’ is also used to refer generally to any verb denoting an event with a theme and a recipient/beneficiary irrespective of its formal transitivity. In case it is central to contrast ditransitive verbs with other trivalent verbs, the two classes will be referred to as ‘ditransitive trivalent verbs’ and ‘transitive trivalent verbs’ on the basis of the number of direct object-like arguments they accept (this use is adopted from Foris 1998).

The morpho-syntactic features of transitivity that are relevant to the discussion in subsequent sections comprise the number and marking of arguments, verb morphology (basic or derived, the latter comprising causatives

and applicatives), verbal cross-referencing, and the applicability of morpho-syntactic operations such as passivization and dative shift. These are thus the same features that are usually relevant to any study concerned with the formal transitivity of clauses. The most important formal feature of (di)transitivity is naturally the number of arguments. Only clauses with three arguments can be regarded as ditransitive. The mere number of arguments, however, is not a sufficient criterion of ditransitivity in the present context; argument marking has to be considered as well. In practice, any verb that has two objects marked in the same way as the direct object of a basic transitive clause will be labelled ditransitive (e.g. *the musician gave the poet a book*). Subjects and direct objects of basic transitive clauses (usually expressing meanings like ‘the linguist painted the house’ or ‘the archeologist broke the cup’) are here regarded as core arguments, which coincides with the traditional use of the label. Any other arguments marked in the same way (as the objects of ditransitive clauses) will also be labelled core arguments (the marking comprises all the features discussed in section 2). Non-core arguments are regarded as adjuncts. Differential marking of the two objects (as in *the musician gave the book to the student*) constitutes a transitive trivalent construction/verb. In some languages (such as English or Dutch) the occurrence of double objects is merely a possibility, and verbs diverge in whether dative shift is applicable to them. Verb morphology (basic vs. derived) distinguishes in many languages between core arguments of verbs and adjuncts, the former also being more closely integrated into the clause core. An example from a transitive clause is illustrated in (4):

Warembori (Donohue 1999: 9)

- (4a) make matin-do (nana ipa-yave)
 boy wash-IND (OBL river-DEF)
 ‘(The) boy is washing (in the river)’

- (4b) e=mena tire a=kue
 1SG=dog see 2SG=chicken
 ‘My dog saw your chicken’

- (4c) make matin-na *(ipa-yave)
 boy wash-APPL (river-DEF)
 ‘(The) boy is washing in the river’

In (4a), the subject appears in the zero-marked nominative case, in addition to which the clause involves an optional locative adjunct, which bears oblique marking, if expressed. In order for the adjunct to bear core marking (also illustrated in (4b)), an applicative suffix has to be attached to the verb. The morphosyntactic status of the direct object in (4b) is higher than in (4c), since no morphological changes in the verb are needed for the direct object to bear core (i.e. non-oblique) marking. In terms of the purposes of the present paper, applicativization/ causativization is of the utmost importance, since in many cases verbs need to be applicativized in order for them to occur in a ditransitive frame. Genuinely ditransitive verbs allow the expression of two core objects without applicativization. Analogically, transitive verbs are often defined as

verbs that permit a direct object. As for verbal cross-referencing, clauses with two cross-referenced object arguments rank higher for formal transitivity than those with one (provided that there is a difference in a given language). The differences in verbal cross-referencing of trivalent clauses were also illustrated in (3) above, in which the form of the cross-referencing affixes varies. Cases like (3a) are considered formally more transitive than the likes of (3b), since (3a) involves two direct object affixes and thus illustrates a double object construction at the level of cross-referencing. Passivization is also often regarded as an important indicator of transitivity (see e.g. Rice 1987 for a detailed description of the relation of passivization and transitivity in English), and is in some cases relevant to trivalent constructions, as shown in (2) above.

The goal of the paper is to argue that in languages with both ditransitive and transitive trivalent verbs, i.e. two (or more) syntactic classes of verbs denoting three-participant events, ‘give’ is almost invariably among the ditransitive verbs. In a similar vein, in languages that lack ditransitives the formal transitivity of ‘give’ is usually higher than that of some other trivalent verbs (see section 2.1.3.). ‘Give’ is thus more similar to basic transitive verbs than to extended intransitives or derived transitives (applicatives/causatives). Languages with this kind of distinction display huge differences in the number of ditransitive verbs they have, but what they do have in common is that ‘give’ is in the far majority of cases accorded ditransitive status, while at least some trivalent verbs are not. In addition to merely illustrating the formal ditransitivity of ‘give’, I will also offer an explanation of it based on semantic evidence; the account which

refers merely to its high frequency of occurrence is an intriguing one, but leaves too many questions unanswered. In other words, I will attempt to show that ‘give’ displays more features of high semantic transitivity, for example in the spirit of Hopper and Thompson (1980) than many other trivalent verbs (see section 3 for a more detailed description of the transitivity features relevant in this regard). More concretely, ‘give’ is more similar to verbs like ‘paint’ and ‘kill’ denoting highly transitive events than to ‘see’, for example. ‘Give’ is thus a formally ditransitive verb that denotes a highly transitive three-participant event. The purpose of the analysis proposed here is not to deny the anomaly ascribed to ‘give’; rather, instead of merely considering the anomaly of frequently used verbs in general, I hope to show that both formal and semantic features of transitivity make a contribution here.

The paper is based on an investigation of approximately 300 languages from all over the world, comprising all language families and language types (no types or families are purposefully favoured). The sample, however, is not systematic and the paper does not strive for true representativeness, for example in the spirit of Haspelmath (2001). In collecting the data, I have taken account of instances of giving that can be translated by ‘give’ in languages in my sample, which are then compared to other verbs of similar valency in a given language. Due to differences in the data in grammars, the verbs used for the languages in question may differ radically in their semantics.

The structure of the paper is briefly as follows. In section 2, the formal ditransitivity of ‘give’ will be illustrated in the light of the features relevant to

formal transitivity in general. I will begin by discussing the most evident examples of languages in which ‘give’ can unarguably be regarded as a ditransitive verb, after which some less manifest types will be considered. Languages in which the distinction between ditransitive and transitive trivalent verbs is not relevant will also be examined. In section 3, the underlying reasons for the formal ditransitivity of ‘give’ will be discussed by examining the semantics of certain three-participant events. A more detailed discussion of semantic transitivity features will also be given in section 3. Section 4 summarizes the most important findings of the paper and proposes a number of universals on the basis of the data in section 2.

2. The formally ditransitive ‘give’

In this section, I illustrate the formal ditransitivity of ‘give’. I will show that ‘give’ indeed outranks other verbs of similar valency in formal transitivity in a number of languages. The relevant properties in this regard comprise, as noted above, the number and marking of arguments, verb morphology and verbal cross-referencing along with the application of certain transitivity-related operations such as passive and dative shift. These are cross-linguistically the most relevant features of transitivity and also contribute to distinguishing between ‘give’ and other trivalent verbs. In the following, I will discuss each of these features (some of them were already touched upon above in section 2).

Each subsection deals with one of the features involved. The proposed analysis is not universally applicable to all languages (see section 2.3.), but the uniformity exhibited by languages in according ‘give’ special prominence is striking, and it is no mere coincidence that it is ‘give’ rather than some other trivalent verb that displays the relevant traits.

2.1. Argument marking

2.1.1. Double object ‘give’

Very clear examples of ditransitive ‘give’ are represented by cases in which all of the arguments can be labelled as core. This means that both objects of ‘give’ bear the same marking, which coincides with the marking of the direct object in a given language. Moreover, it is central that a given language also has transitive trivalent verbs, i.e. verbs that accord differential marking to their objects. Otherwise, ‘give’ cannot be distinguished from other trivalent verbs. Examples are illustrated in (5)-(7):

Walmatjari (Hudson 1978: 26, 24)

- (5a) kapi-warnti-Ø pa-Ø-rla yinya parri-Ø
 fish-PL-NOM MR1-3SG.S-3SG.O gave boy-NOM
 ‘He gave the fishes to the boy’

(6a)	y-ovog-i	nompwat	nvag
	3SG.DISTPAST-BR.give-CONST	PN	food
	‘S/he gave the food to Nompwat’		
(6b)	y-ovog-kam		nvat
	3SG.DISTPAST-BR.give-1PL.EXCL		money
	‘S/he gave us money’		
(6c)	*y-ovog-i	nvat	pog-kam
	3SG.DISTPAST-BR.give-CONST	money	DAT-1PL.EXCL
	(S/he gave us money)		
(6d)	yi-tamul-i	nvat	pog-kam
	3SG.DISTPAST-BR.send-CONST	money	DAT-1PL.EXCL
	‘S/he sent us money’		
(6e)	*yi-tamul-cam	nvat	
	3SG.DISTPAST-BR.send-1PL.EXCL		money
	(S/he sent us money)		

Berbice Dutch Creole (Kouwenberg 1994: 394f)

- (7a) en kɛnɛ pi eni en gutu ka
 one person give 3PL one thing NEG

‘Nobody gives them anything’

- (7b) o ma tiri en pi ɛkɛ
 3SG IRR send one give 1SG

‘He will send me one’

- (7c) *o pitɛ di gutu pi ɛkɛ
 3SG give.PF the thing give 1SG

(S/he gave me the thing)

All these languages behave similarly in according ‘give’ double object marking. What is also important is that ‘give’ is one of the few verbs that allow this marking in these particular languages; in Walmatjari and Berbice Dutch Creole it is the only genuinely ditransitive verb, while in Erromangan there are four verbs that pattern ditransitively. With other verbs the Recipient bears a different marking, and the marking patterns are thus merely transitive. The three languages differ from each other in the way differences in the encoding of the two objects are manifested. In Walmatjari and Erromangan, the difference is between zero-marked (absolutive) and overtly case-marked (dative) objects. In Walmatjari, the cross-referencing of ‘give’ is also formally more transitive than that of ‘send’. In Berbice Dutch Creole, ‘give’ is the only trivalent verb whose

Recipient is not preceded by the serial verb *pi*, and it thus bears core marking. Further examples of languages with similar variation ('give' being the only ditransitive verb) include Ernabella Pitjantjatjara (Platt 1976: 429), Gurr-Goni (Green 1995: 84), Nungali (Hoddinott & Kofod 1976: 438), Yankunytjatjara (Goddard 1983: 31f), Waray (Harvey 1986: 215f) and Gulf Arabic (Holes 1990: 40f, 120). There is a strong tendency for the objects of 'give' to occur in core cases, while one of two objects appears in oblique cases with other verbs, if there is variation (cf. also Haspelmath 2003: 9).

In (5)-(7), the two objects of 'give' occur in a core case, which in the present context means that they bear the same marking as the direct object. Somewhat different examples of this are provided below:

Hindi/Urdu (examples courtesy of Bertil Tikkanen)

- (8a) ādmī ne aurat ko kitāb dī
 man ERG womanDAT book.ABS give.SG.F.PAT.PRET
 'The man gave a/the book to the woman'

- (8b) ādmī ne aurat ke lie kitāb
 man ERG womanGEN for book.ABS
 xarīd-ī
 buy-SG.F.PAT.PRET
 'The man bought a/the book for the woman'

Amharic (examples courtesy of Mengistu Amberber)

(9a) səwiyyəw sətiyyəwa-n məs'haf

man.DEF woman.DEF-ACC book

sət'-at

give.PERF.3MASC-3FEM.O

'The man gave the woman a book'

(9b) səwiyyəw məs'haf-u-n lə-sətiyyəwa

man.DEF book-DEF-ACC to-woman.DEF

lak-ə-w

send.PERF-3MASC-3MASC.O

'The man sent a book to the woman',^{viii}

Both these languages display differential object marking, which means that animate direct objects appear in an accusative/dative case (in Hindi these cases are not formally distinct), while indefinite and inanimate direct objects bear zero marking. This is also reflected in ditransitive clauses in which the Recipient appears in the accusative/dative case, since it is animate, while the Theme usually bears zero marking due to its inanimate character. Double accusative clauses are possible in both languages but are avoided, even if both objects refer to animate entities. The marking of both objects in a ditransitive clause is thus usually (apart from cases like 'he gave the baby to its mother') identical to that in transitive clauses, which means that the animate object (Recipient) appears in the

accusative/dative while the inanimate one (Theme) bears zero marking. Hence the constructions in (8a) and (9a) have two objects marked in the same way as the direct object. We thus have no just reason for regarding the marking of either object as oblique. In contrast to (5)-(7) the marking of the objects in ditransitive clauses is distinct, but the marking coincides in most cases with the direct object. Moreover, similarly to (5)-(7), ‘give’ marks the two objects identically to the direct object, while with ‘buy’ and ‘send’ only the Recipient bears accusative/dative marking.

2.1.2. Optionally double object ‘give’

In 2.1.1. the differences between ‘give’ and other trivalent verbs are evident, since ‘give’ occurs in a double object frame while the other trivalent verbs illustrated do not. There are also languages in which individual trivalent verbs can occur in more than one frame, one of which is usually ditransitive and the other transitive. In these cases too, ‘give’ is invariably among the potentially ditransitive verbs. This is illustrated in (10)-(12):

Supyire (Carlson 1994: 270)

- (10a) kà nɔ̃ɡɔ-lyɛ̀nǐ sì ŋkùù kan u à
 and man-old.DEF NARR chicken give him to
 ‘Then my father gave a chicken to me’

(10b) kà pi í tūnnturé jwo u à
 and they NARR message.DEF say him to
 ‘They told him (lit. said to him) the message’

(10c) u ŋye à lɛtɛrí túúgó m̀ì á mɛ
 he they PERF letter send me to NEG
 ‘He didn’t send me a letter’

(10d) mu à zhán kan la?
 you PERF Jean give Q
 ‘Have you given Jean (some)’

Koyra Chiini (Heath 1999: 129, 247)

(11a) I noo ga yer se
 3PL.S give 3SG.O 1PL DAT
 ‘They gave it to us’

(11b) a sufur yene mobil
 3SG.S rent 1SG.DAT vehicle
 ‘He rented me a car’

(11c) ay noo ni ga
 1SG.S give 2SG.O 3SG.O
 ‘I gave it to you’

(11d) I noo ey njerfu
 3PL.S give 1SG.O money
 ‘They gave me some money’

(Colloquial) Malay (examples courtesy of Foong Ha Yap)

(12a) dia beri buku itu kepada perempuan itu
 3SG give book DEF to woman DEF
 ‘S/he gave the book to the woman’

(12b) dia beri perempuan itu buku itu
 3SG give woman DEF book DEF
 ‘S/he gave the woman the book’

(12c) lelaki itu beli buku itu untuk dia
 man DEF buy book DEF for 3SG
 ‘The man bought a book for him/her’

(12d) *lelaki itu beli dia buku itu
 man DEF buy 3SG book DEF
 (The man bought him/her the book)

In Supyire and Koyra Chiini there is no difference in the marking of the Recipient in (10a-c) or (11a-b); the Recipient invariably bears a dative marking. This constitutes a difference compared to (5)-(7), in which ‘give’ is encoded differently from other trivalent verbs. The number of verbs that allow this is very low; and in addition to the cases exemplified above, in Koyra Chiini only ‘say’, ‘show’, ‘lend’ and ‘sell’ allow the Recipient to bear a dative marking. On the basis of the argument marking in the above examples, we can thus distinguish ‘give’ from most trivalent verbs. However, if we take into account the effects of

dative shift, ‘give’ can be regarded as the only (potentially) ditransitive verb in these languages, since only it can occur in a double-object frame. A somewhat similar case is attested in Lunda-Ndembu (Givón 2001: 144), in which ‘give’ obligatorily requires dative shift, while this is optional with many other trivalent verbs. The examples from Malay are in principle very similar to those from Supyire and Koyra Chiini. The difference lies in the differential marking of the Recipient. In (12a) the Recipient is preceded by *kepada* ‘to’, while in (12c) the preposition employed is *untuk* ‘for’. The two different Recipients are thus in principle distinguishable on this basis alone. However, we are dealing in both cases with a prepositionally marked Recipient that clearly falls outside the clause core, and there are thus no clear differences in the status of the two arguments, nor is the employed frame ditransitive. The differences in formal transitivity become obvious only if we take into account the effects of dative shift. ‘Give’ is the only verb in the language that allows this (without applicativization of the verb), and (12d) is hence ungrammatical.

The examples in (10)-(12) illustrate what is typically labelled dative shift. In the languages scrutinized, ‘give’ is the only verb that optionally occurs in a double-object frame, and can thus be labelled (potentially) ditransitive. I next examine two similar, yet different cases in which ‘give’ deviates from other trivalent verbs as regards the modification of Recipient marking:

- | | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| (13a) | ɲadu-ɲgu | ɲa-ɲa-ɲgu | maɲari | ɲunuɲa |
| | 1SG-ERG | C-1SG.NOM-2SG.DAT | food.ABS | 2SG.DAT |
| | juɲ-an | | | |
| | give-PRES | | | |
| | ‘I give food to you’ | | | |
| (13b) | ɲadu-ɲgu | ɲa-ɲa-ɲgu | mundu | maɲari |
| | 1SG-ERG | C-1SG.NOM-2SG.DAT | 2SG.ABS | food.ABS |
| | juɲ-an | | | |
| | give-PRES | | | |
| | ‘I give food to you’ | | | |
| (13c) | maluga-maluga-la | ɲa-ɲalu-janula | | |
| | old man-REDUP-LOC | C-1PL.EXCL.NOM-3PL.LOC | | |
| | diri jaan-an | giɲimilij | | |
| | show-PRES | spear.ABS | | |
| | ‘We show a spear to old men’ | | | |
| (13d) | jalu-ɲgu | mawun-du | ɲa-anula | diri jaan-an |
| | that-ERG | man-ERG | C-3PL.LOC | show-PRES |
| | ɲandawi | jamba-jamba-wu | | |
| | shadow | child-REDUP-DAT1 | | |
| | ‘That man shows a photo to children’ | | | |

Pitjantjatjara (Bowe 1990: 24f)

- (14a) minyma-ngku tjitji mai u-ngu
 woman-ERG child.ABS bread.ABS give-PAST
 ‘The woman gave the child some bread’
- (14b) minyma-ngku tjitji tjukurpa wangka-ngu
 woman-ERG child.ABS story.ABS tell-PAST
 ‘The woman told the child a story’
- (14c) minyma-ngku tjitji-ngka tjukurpa wangka-ngu
 woman-ERG child-LOC story.ABS tell-PAST
 ‘The woman told a story to the child’

The two languages differ from those in (10)-(12) in that the Recipient allows more variation in its marking and/or the nature of the variation is different. The examples from Djaru are in many respects very similar to those examined in (10)-(12), but in Djaru the variation in the marking of Recipient is possible in more general terms, as shown in (13c-d) with ‘show’. ‘Give’, however, is the only verb in Djaru that allows two unmarked core objects, as in (13b) (the affix that cross-references the Recipient remains in the dative). With ‘show’, the promotion can only be from locative to dative, i.e. the variation concerns two non-zero cases. Pitjantjatjara in turn illustrates a language with an anti-dative very much in the sense of Dryer (1986: 821). In this language, both ‘give’ and ‘tell’ can appear in a double-object frame, as shown above. Differences between the two verbs arise if we take (13b-c) into account. Only ‘tell’ permits the

Recipient to appear in the locative, while ‘give’ invariably occurs in a double-object frame. This thus illustrates the exact opposite of (10)-(12), in which ‘give’ is the only verb that optionally occurs in a ditransitive frame. A similar case is attested in Martuthunira (Dench 1995: 220), where ‘give’ is one of the very many verbs that can appear in a NOM-ACC-ACC -frame. What distinguishes ‘give’ e.g. from ‘speak’ and ‘tell’ is that the latter also allow the NOM-ACC-ALL(ative) frame, which is ungrammatical with ‘give’. Martuthunira deviates from Pitjantjatjara in that the number of verbs that can appear in a ditransitive frame is greater, and ‘give’ is only one such verb. Hence the association with high formal transitivity is not so evident as in Pitjantjatjara.

2.1.3. Case-marked ‘give’ vs. adpositional trivalent verbs

In the languages exemplified in (10)-(14), ‘give’ occurs in a ditransitive frame, while many other trivalent verbs govern a non-core Recipient, which constitutes a deviation from the direct object marking. The differences between ditransitive and other trivalent verbs are thus evident. I now examine cases in which the distinction between ‘give’ and other trivalent verbs is less manifest in that the languages in question lack ditransitives (i.e. double object constructions at the level of argument marking). In the cases examined below, however, the encoding of ‘give’ can be regarded as formally more transitive than that of other trivalent verbs, since ‘give’ has a case-marked Recipient, while that of other trivalent verbs (or constructions) bears adpositional marking; this can be

considered less core-like (in languages that mark arguments in both ways). In these cases, ‘give’ also invariably represents a formally more transitive verb. Examples are given in (15)-(16):

Turkish (examples courtesy of Tülin Özen)

- (15a) adam kitab-ı kadın-a verdi
 man.NOM book-ACC woman-DAT give.PAST.3SG
 ‘The man gave the book to the woman’

- (15b) adam kadın için kitab-ı satınaldı
 man.NOM womanfor book-ACC buy.PAST.3SG
 ‘The man bought a book for the woman’

Burushaski (examples courtesy of Bertil Tikkanen)

- (16a) hır-e gús-mu-r kitáap
 man-ERG woman-OBL-DAT book.ABS
 mu-chhí-m-i
 3SG.FEM.REC(DAT)-give.SG.Y.PAT(ABS)-PRET-3SG.MASC.XY.A
 G(ERG)
 ‘The man gave the book to the woman’

- (16b) hır-e gús-mo gáne kitáap gásh-ar
 man-ERG woman-GEN for book.ABS price-DAT
 gan-ím-i
 take.Y.PAT(ABS)-PRET-3SG.MXY.AG(ERG)

‘The man bought the book for the woman’

In contrast to the languages in (10)-(14), in Turkish and Burushaski the Recipient invariably bears non-core marking. Moreover, it is not possible to promote the Recipient to accusative via dative shift. Hence we cannot argue for genuine ditransitivity of any of these clauses. However, the syntactic status of the Recipient varies depending on the verb. In the a-versions of each clause pair the Recipient is a case-marked argument, while in the b-clauses it is more adjunct-like, since it is marked by an adposition ‘for’ in both languages. We thus have reason to claim that the deviation from the core is more prominent in the latter cases, and ‘give’ thus displays more traits of high transitivity than ‘buy’. Similar cases are attested in many languages, and if we proceed far enough from the semantics of ‘give’, most languages similar to Turkish and Burushaski accord adpositional marking to the Recipient.

2.1.4. Freely passivized ‘give’

Thus far, I have discussed differences between ‘give’ and other trivalent verbs from the viewpoint of argument marking. I next proceed to discussing differences in argument (object) status. The feature examined is passivization. In many languages passivization distinguishes highly transitive from less transitive clauses. Nevertheless it is not always applicable, since in many languages intransitive clauses also allow passivization. The criterion of passivability is less

relevant with regard to distinguishing ‘give’ from other trivalent verbs, since in many languages only one of the objects of ditransitive constructions can be promoted to the subject of a passive (see e.g. Dryer 1986: 830), and neither of the two objects qualifies as a direct object in this regard. There are, however, also languages in which passivization contributes to distinguishing ‘give’ from other trivalent verbs:

Maltese (Borg & Comrie 1984: 118, 121, repeated here for convenience)

- (2a) l-ittra n-ghata-t /n-t-werie-t lil pawlu
 the-letter gave-PASS-she/showed-PASS-she to Paul
 ‘The letter was given/shown to Paul’

- (2b) pawlu n-ghata /n-t-wera l-ittra
 Paul gave-PASS-he/showed-PASS-he the-letter
 ‘Paul was given/shown the letter’

- (2c) l-ilsien ingliz in-t-ghallem lil bniet u subien
 the-language English teach.PASS to girls and boys
 ‘The English language was taught to girls and boys’

- (2d) *il-bniet u s-subien in-t-ghallm-u l-ilsien ingliz
 the-girls and the-boys teach.PASS.them
 (The girls and boys were taught English)

Tigrinya (Palmer 1994: 123f)

(17a) mäsğənnā nə-bärhe mäshaf

Mesgenna ANIM-Berhe book

hibu-wo

gave.3SG.MASC-3SG.MASC

‘Mesgenna gave Berhe a book’

(17b) mäshaf nə-bärhe bə-mäsğənnā tä-wahibu

book ANIM-bärhe by-Mesgenna PASS-gave.3SG.MASC

‘The book was given to Berhe by Mesgenna’

(17c) bärhe mäshaf bə-mäsğənnā tä-wahibu

Berhe book by-Mesgenna PASS-gave.3SG.MASC

‘Berhe was given a book by Mesgenna’

(17d) mäshaf nə-bärhe bə-mäsğənnā

book ANIM-Berhe by-Mesgenna

tä-‘ädigu-llu

PASS-sold.3SG.MASC.to.3SG.MASC

‘A book was sold to Berhe by Mesgenna’

(17e) *bärhe mäshaf bə-mäsğənnā tä-‘ädigu

Berhe book by-Mesgenna PASS-sold.3SG.MASC

(Berhe was sold a book by Mesgenna)

In neither Maltese nor Tigrinya does the marking of arguments aid us in distinguishing the verbs examined from each other, since none of the objects of

these verbs bear non-core marking (see (1) from Maltese). Differences do arise, however, if we take into account the ungrammaticality of (2d) and (17e). In both languages, ‘give’ allows both objects to be promoted to the subject of passive, while ‘teach’ and ‘sell’ are incapable of this. Thus, if we consider passivization as a feature associated with direct objects (which is the received view among linguists), ‘give’ has two direct objects, and can be regarded as a ditransitive verb, while ‘teach’ and ‘sell’, in Maltese and Tigrinya respectively, have only one object and are thus not ditransitive verbs (cf. also Dryer 1986:830). On the basis of argument marking alone, ‘teach’ and ‘sell’ are also ditransitive verbs in Tigrinya.

2.1.5. ‘Give’ with three mandatorily expressed arguments (syntactically ditransitive ‘give’)

In addition to the formal transitive features related to ‘give’ discussed so far, ‘give’ differs from other trivalent verbs in some languages in being more reluctant to allow free omission of any of its three arguments. English is among these languages, and the following clauses can justly be considered odd:

(18a) ?the man gave the book

(18b) ?the man gave to the boy

(18c) ?the man took from/to the boy (but: the man took the book)

(18d) ?the man bought for/from the woman (but: the man bought the book)

(18e) ?the woman borrowed to/from the man (but: the man borrowed a book)

(18f) ?the man told to the boy (but: the man told a story)

All the events denoted above inherently involve three participants at some level of conceptualization.^{ix} However, *give* is the only verb that rather mandatorily requires an explicit reference to all three participants. The examples above are marginal in English, even though there are certainly contexts in which they are acceptable. It is, however, fairly safe to say that their degree of acceptability is lower than that of the sentences in brackets. Similar variation in felicity is also attested in Finnish, Swedish (in which (18a) is acceptable), German, Russian, Norwegian, Spanish, Hindi, Swahili and Kiha. In Japanese, Korean, Hungarian and Shipibo-Conibo, on the other hand, every argument that is recoverable from the context can be left out, and the variation illustrated above is not attested.^x Languages like English and others mentioned here thus show that ‘give’ in fact requires three arguments, while ‘take’, ‘buy’, ‘borrow’ and ‘tell’ are only optionally trivalent with regard to the number of arguments explicitly expressed (see also Janda 1998: 262 for Slavic, and Tuggy 1998: 35 and Newman 1996: 57 in general). The examples in (18) also show that the Theme argument outranks the Recipient in syntactic status. What also speaks for the mandatory trivalency of ‘give’ is that with ‘give’ (18a) is also infelicitous, even though the omission of the Recipient yields a typical transitive clause in English (as well as Finnish, Russian, Spanish etc.). With ‘give’ the presence of all three arguments is thus more obligatory than with other verbs of similar valency. One of the possible

reasons for this lies in the rather uninformative nature of ‘give’. It merely refers to the transfer of a thing, without any further information. Verbs like ‘buy’ and ‘borrow’ are more informative in this respect, and the distribution of the relevant semantic roles is also different (see section 3 for more detailed discussion).

2.2. On the verb morphology of ‘give’

In section 2.1, the ditransitive nature of ‘give’ was discussed in the light of features related to argument marking and argument status. The data showed that in the languages examined, ‘give’ is invariably in the class of ditransitive verbs. I next examine the verb morphology of ‘give’. The goal is to show that ‘give’ can be considered ditransitive in this respect too. Here, this means that ‘give’ allows the expression of two direct objects without changes (applicativization or causativization) in the verb morphology. ‘Give’ is thus a underived ditransitive verb. Numerous other trivalent verbs need to be applicativized in order to make the expression of two direct objects possible. What is also interesting is that many of the other trivalent verbs denote three-participant events (e.g. ‘send’ or ‘tell’), so it is not only the number of participants that is important here. In addition to the basic vs. derived verb morphology of ‘give’ vs. other trivalent verbs, verbal cross-referencing will be examined briefly.

2.2.1. ‘Give’ as an underived ditransitive verb

As can be predicted on the basis of the above brief introduction, ‘give’ is among the ditransitive verbs (used in a ditransitive construction) that display unmarked verb morphology, if a given language exhibits variation between derived and underived ditransitive verbs. This is illustrated below:

Southeastern Tepehuan (Willett 1991: 76f)

- (19a) añ dyo gui-m maqui-a’ ji ja’p
 1SG PE CLR-2SG give-FUT EMP thus
 sap titda
 REU told

‘“I will give it to you”, he told me’

- (19b) ma’n kilo-p jiñ-ga’hli-dya-‘ gu on gu-x
 one kilo-2SG 1SG-sell-APPL-FUT ART salt ART-ATR
 ví
 fine

‘Please sell me one kilogram of fine-grained salt’

- (19c) jaró ba-m-bii-dya-c gu-m sa’ua
 who TWD-2SG-pass-APPL-PI ART-2SG blanket

‘Who brought you your blanket’

Yimas (Foley 1991: 212, 309)

- (20a) makaw wa-mpu-ŋa-r-mpun
 fish.IX.SG IX.SG.T-3PL.A-give-PERF-3PL.D
 ‘They gave makau to them’
- (20b) yara ya-ka-kra-ŋa-r-akn
 tree.V.PL V.PL.T-1SG.A-cut-BEN-PERF-3SG.D
 ‘I cut trees for him’

Ígbo (Sáàh & Ézè 1994: 141)

- (21a) òbí nyèrè adá ego
 PN gave PN money
 ‘Obi gave Ada money’
- (21b) chíké bùteere únù jí
 PN brought.APPL 2PL yam
 ‘Chike brought you (PL) yams’
- (21c) *chíké bùtere únù jí
 PN brought you.PL yam
 (Chike brought you (PL) yams)

In contrast to the cases illustrated in the previous section (apart from 2.1.4.), argument marking does not allow any division between the cases illustrated, since all clauses have two identically marked objects, which makes them ditransitive in this regard. The only differences between the clauses lie in the

derived verb morphology of trivalent verbs other than ‘give’. ‘Give’ is one of the underived ditransitives in all of these languages, meaning that it is possible to introduce a Recipient marked as the direct object without any changes in the verb morphology. With many other verbs, applicativization is needed for this. ‘Give’ thus involves two direct objects, in the same way as basic transitive verbs involve one direct object. If the latter is taken as a criterion of transitivity (as it often is), the capacity to express two objects can be seen as a feature of ditransitivity. On the other hand, verbs that need applicativization for this are more similar to transitive clauses derived via causativization and do not qualify as ditransitive, in the same way that causativized intransitives are not considered basic transitive verbs. The languages above differ from each other in the number of underived ditransitive verbs. In Tepehuan, ‘give’ is the only underived ditransitive verb, as explicitly stated by Willet (*ibid.*). Similar cases have been reported for Chukchi (Dunn 1999: 206), Olutec (Zavala 2000: 668) and Kanuri (Hutchison 1981: 136), in addition to which Swahili and Kiha also exemplify this language type (Lotta Harjula, personal communication). In Yimas, the verbs ‘show’, ‘tell’ and ‘rub on’ also exhibit basic verb morphology (see Foley 1991: 206). With regard to Ígbo, Sááh & Ézè do not discuss any other verbs besides ‘give’ and ‘buy’, so it is not possible to say anything definite on the number of underived ditransitive verbs in the language. Similar cases are attested for Zulu (Taylor 1998: 75), Nkore-Kiga (Taylor 1985: 92) and Tsez (Comrie 2000: 363), but detailed information on the number of underived ditransitive verbs is lacking in the sources.

The ditransitivity of ‘give’ is further reflected in the fact that in many languages the benefactive application of ‘give’ produces a four-place verb, as in the languages illustrated below:

Ìgbo (Sáàh & Ézè 1997: 141)

- (22a) òbí nyèère m adá ego
 PN gave.APPL 1SG PN money
 ‘Obi gave Ada money for me’

- (22b) *òbí nyèère adá ego
 PN gave.APPL PN money
 (Obi gave Ada money)

Ute (Givón 1984: 159)

- (23) ta’wá-ci ‘uwáy mamá-ci ‘uwáy po’óqwa-tu
 man-OBJ him woman-OBJ her book-OBJ
 ‘uwá-rugwa-ku-pugá
 her-give-BEN-REM
 ‘(He) gave the woman a book for the man’

In (19)-(21), the benefactive affixes yield a (derived) ditransitive verb, since the underlying verb is monotransitive. In (22)-(23), the result is a verb with three objects that bear the same marking as the direct object, which provides direct evidence for the inherent ditransitivity associated with ‘give’ in the cited

languages. A mere ditransitive use of the resulting verb is entirely impossible in Ígbo, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (22b).

2.2.2. Cross-referencing

In addition to verb morphology, verbal cross-referencing is also an important formal property relating to the transitivity of verbs.^{xi} Usually only core arguments, if any, are cross-referenced on the verb. Furthermore, the cross-referencing affixes may vary (this refers to differences between different kinds of direct and indirect object agreement affixes). On the basis of what has been illustrated so far, we can predict that the cross-referencing of ‘give’ will be considered more transitive in case a language displays variation in this regard. The issue of cross-referencing, however, is far from clear with respect to distinguishing between various trivalent verbs, since usually at most two arguments are cross-referenced on the verb. Even though agreement in many languages shifts in trivalent constructions from the direct object of transitive clauses to the Recipient (i.e. they are marked on the verb with the same affixes), there is no adequate way of arguing for the higher formal transitivity (let alone ditransitivity) of either agreement pattern. The number of cross-referenced arguments is retained, and the two patterns are simply different, with no clear difference in transitivity. However, despite the limitations of cross-referencing employed as an indicator of ditransitivity, there are some cases that provide further evidence for the higher degree of formal transitivity of ‘give’:

Barai (Foley 1986: 97, cited from Olson 1981)

- (24a) bu iro fu-one a vaj-a
 they yam he-POSS you give-2SG
 ‘They gave you his yams’

- (24b) na fu-efuoire kira-ke
 I he-BEN food prepare-FUT
 ‘I will prepare food for him’

- (24c) na a ire kira-j-a
 I you food prepare-BEN-2SG
 ‘I am preparing food for you’

Kalkatungu (Blake 1979: 42, 91)

- (25a) marapai-tu jini ati apa-kin?
 woman-ERG you meat gave-you
 ‘Did the woman give you meat?’

- (25b) ŋa-ci ŋalu-ju ŋai kari-ŋcamaji kunti
 me-DAT daughter-ERG me clean-TR house
 ‘My daughter cleaned the house for me’

Imonda (Seiler 1985: 142f)

- (26a) ka-m fa-ai-h-u
 1-GOAL CL-give-REC-IMP
 ‘Give me’

- (26b) ka-m fa-ai-Ø-u
 1-GOAL CL-give-REC.NON-SG-IMP
 ‘Give us’
- (26c) ka-m ã-na-u
 1-GOAL say-BEN-IMP
 ‘Tell me’

Examples from Barai, Kalkatungu and Imonda illustrate cases in which the number of arguments cross-referenced on the verb varies depending on the trivalent verb. In Kalkatungu and Barai, only Recipients can be cross-referenced on the verb, while Benefactives cannot. In Barai, it is possible to promote the Benefactive to the clause core via applicativization, in which case it is also cross-referenced on the verb. In (25b), from Kalkatungu, the Benefactive is not cross-referenced, even though it seems to have been promoted to the clause core via applicativization. Imonda differs from the other two languages in that the cross-referencing of Recipient is obligatory, while that of Benefactives is optional. In the case of Barai, Kalkatungu and Imonda, it is clear that the number of arguments cross-referenced on the verb is higher with ‘give’, but the number does not increase from two to three, which would indicate genuine ditransitivity. However, the number of objects cross-referenced is higher with ‘give’, which yields a difference in formal transitivity. It is also noteworthy that the differences in the status of the participants referred to in (24)-(26) are very obvious, and

‘give’ is hence presumably not the only verb that exhibits this kind of cross-referencing. This is in clear contrast to the examples in (21)-(23).

In (24)-(26), verbs allow a different number of cross-referencing affixes. The other type of cases in which verbs differ with respect to the transitivity of verbal cross-referencing is illustrated by languages like Maltese, in which the morphology of the affixes is different while their number is retained:

Maltese (Borg & Comrie 1984: 113, 117)

(27a) Xtraj-t-ilha l-ktieb lil marija

bought-I-to=her the-book to Mary

‘I bought the book for OR from Mary’

(27b) marija ta-t-u /urie-t-u l-ittra (lit-t-tifel)

Mary gave-she-him /showed-she-him the-letter (to-the-boy)

‘Mary gave/showed the letter to him’

In Maltese, only the Recipient of ‘give’ and ‘show’ can be cross-referenced by a direct object affix, while that of other trivalent verbs, such as ‘buy’, cannot. This means that ‘give’ (along with ‘show’) has two direct objects at the level of verbal cross-referencing, and can thus be regarded as a ditransitive verb in this regard, while other trivalent verbs cannot. Similar cases are also attested in Tiwi (Osborne 1974: 40) and Yawuru (Hosokawa 1991: 319f). Maltese is also an interesting case in that verbal cross-referencing can be claimed to outrank the

marking on nominal arguments with relevance to transitivity, since the nominal Recipient is marked identically in both (27a) and (27b).

2.3. Deviant cases

In the previous sections, I have examined languages in which ‘give’ outranks many other trivalent verbs in formal transitivity. In the most typical cases, ‘give’ is clearly a ditransitive verb, while many other trivalent verbs are transitive verbs with an additional adjunct. In addition, there are also cases in which the difference is less evident, since the language in question lacks the class of ditransitive verbs, but in which the Recipient of ‘give’ is closer to the clause core than that of other verbs (see 2.1.3.). I next examine languages that violate the generalization proposed in 2.1. and 2.2. I first discuss languages that lack ditransitives altogether, in addition to which the morpho-syntactic status of different indirect objects^{xii} is the same (i.e. the differences examined in 2.1.3. are lacking). Languages in which the number of ditransitives is too high to make any sensible distinction on the basis of verb semantics will also be discussed in this context. Secondly, I discuss languages that are counterexamples to the generalizations above. These languages contravene my hypothesis, in that in terms of the transitivity features discussed it is not ‘give’ but some other trivalent verb that exhibits ditransitivity.

2.3.1. Neutral cases

In this section, I examine languages that lack the class of ditransitive verbs defined in terms of the features discussed above. I also discuss languages in which the class of ditransitives comprises a very high number of verbs, since in these cases it is harder to argue for the formally ditransitive nature of ‘give’ alone. I have chosen to label the languages discussed as ‘neutral’, since they cannot be analyzed in the same way as the languages in 2.1 and 2.2, but they do not actually violate the generalizations of 2.1 or 2.2.

Languages without (underived) ditransitives can be divided into two types, according to whether the lack of ditransitives follows from argument marking or from verb morphology. The former is illustrated in (28)-(30):

Iranian Azari (Denghani 2000: 146ff)

- (28a) măn kitab-ı uşag-ya ver-di-m
 I book-ACC child-DAT give-PAST-1SG
 ‘I gave the book to the child’
- (28b) măn alma-nı ali-dän al-dı-m
 I apple-ACC Ali-ABL buy-PAST-1SG
 ‘I bought the apple from Ali’
- (28c) măn kitab-ı uşag-ıçın al-dı-m
 I book-ACC child-BEN buy-PAST-1SG
 ‘I bought the book for the child’

Evenki (Nedjalkov 1997: 67)

- (29a) Girki-v min-du omakta-va purta-va
 friend-1SG.POSS 1SG-DAT new-ACC.DEF knife-ACC.DEF
 bu:re-n
 give-NONFUT-3SG
 ‘My friend gave me a/the new knife’

- (29b) Asi edy-vi amin-tyki-vi
 woman husband-POSS.REFL father-LOCALL-POSS.REFL
 ung-che-n
 send-PAST-3SG
 ‘The woman sent her husband to her father’

- (29c) Hunat hute-kle-vi mu:-je
 girl child-LOC DIR-POSS.REFL water-ACC.INDEF
 emev-re-n
 bring-NONFUT-3SG
 ‘The girl brought water to her child’

Maori (Bauer et al 1993: 272)

- (30a) i hoatu ahau i te maaripi ki
 T/A give 1SG DO the knife PREP
 tana hoa maa hone
 SG.GEN.3SG friend PREP John

‘I gave the knife to John’s friend for John’

(30b) kei te whakamaarama ia i ngaa koorero

T/A explain 3SG PREP the.PL talk

pakitara ki ngaa tamariki

fiction PREP the.PL children

‘She is explaining the stories to the children’

(30c) kua mahi-a e pani he kapu tii maa

T/A make-PASS by Pani a cup tea PREP

raatou

3PL

‘Pani has made them a cup of tea’

In Azari and Evenki, the indirect object invariably occurs in a case other than the subject or Theme (the latter is marked in the same way as the direct object). In Maori the arguments are marked with prepositions, and as shown in (30), the preposition used for Recipient/Benefactive is different from that employed for subject and Theme. Moreover, the languages in question lack dative shift, which distinguishes them from Supyire, Koyra Chiini and Malay. As a consequence, all these languages lack ditransitive verbs in the sense the term is understood in the present context. What is also interesting is that the marking of the indirect object is sensitive to role. Recipients, Benefactives and Sources are marked differently in Azari. Evenki in turn distinguishes a range of subtly different recipients by according them distinct case marking, while Maori distinguishes between

Recipients and Benefactives via prepositions (*ki* and *maa*, respectively). However, in contrast to the languages examined in 2.1.3., there are no directly observable differences in formal transitivity: in Azari and Evenki the indirect object is invariably case-marked, while in Maori it always bears adpositional marking. This means that ‘give’ is not directly distinguishable from other trivalent verbs on the basis of formal transitivity features, despite the overt discrimination of the roles in question.

In Azari, Evenki and Maori, the lack of ditransitives follows from features of argument marking. The languages in question invariably mark the indirect object distinctively from subject and Theme, which excludes the occurrence of double object constructions. In addition, there are languages in which the verb morphology excludes ditransitivity. Languages of this type do not have underived ditransitives; all verbs employed in a ditransitive frame obligatorily bear applicative morphology. The number of these languages is considerably lower than those in (28)-(30), but they do exist. An example is examined below:

Tzotzil (Aissen 1987: 104f)

- (31a) ?a li xun-e ba y-ak’ chitom
 TOP the PN-CLgo A3-give pig
 ‘Xun went to give the pig’

- (31b) ?a li xun-e ba y-ak'-be chitom li
 TOP the PN-CL go A3-give-APPL pig the
 ?antz-e
 woman-CL
 'Xun went to give the pig to the woman'
- (31c) *?a li xun-e ba y-ak' chitom li
 TOP the PN-CL go A3-give pig the
 ?antz-e
 woman-CL
 (Xun went to give the pig to the woman)

As can be seen in (31), Tzotzil lacks the class of underived ditransitive verbs. All the verbs used in a ditransitive frame must bear the affix *-be*. Because of this, (31a) can only have one object, while (31c) is ungrammatical. Benefactives too are introduced into clauses by the affix *-be*, as are the Recipients of such verbs as 'sell', 'bring', 'say' and 'take away from' (Aissen 1987: 106). The argument marking is ditransitive (if all three arguments are expressed), but the verb morphology is derived. Other languages without underived ditransitives include Taba (Bowden 2001: 121) and Miya (Schuh 1998: 295).

Examples (28)-(31) illustrate languages that lack a class of ditransitive verbs in terms of formal features of transitivity. Further examples of languages regarded as neutral in the present context are provided by languages in which a

clear class of ditransitive verbs can be formally distinguished, but in which it is very hard to make any distinction between ‘give’ and other trivalent verbs, since a very high number of verbs occur in a ditransitive frame. An illustrative example is provided by Sochiapan Chinantec:

Sochiapan Chinantec (Foris 2000: 245f)

- (32a) má^M lĩ^M-kue^L cú^M mĩ^H-tieĩ^{MH} cii^L øú^H
 PERF HOD-give.DA.3 3 cat DIM grasshopper
 ‘S/he just gave a grasshopper to the cat’
- (32b) ka^L-ʔie^L cú^M pé^H cá^Mmĩ^L ʔĩ^L
 PAST-show.DA.3 3 Peter woman that
 ‘S/he presented that woman to Peter’
- (32c) ka^L-cii^M cú^M ʔa^H ŋiú^Mmĩ^H
 PAST-remove.DI.3 3 shirt boy
 ‘S/he removed the shirt from the boy’

The first two examples illustrate the encoding of typical three-participant events. The ditransitive marking of both is thus predicted. However, what makes Sochiapan Chinantec interesting is the ditransitive marking of events like ‘remove’. (32c) also involves two unmarked objects, and the marking thus qualifies as ditransitive. As a result, there are no semantic features that would make it possible to distinguish between different ditransitive constructions that clearly denote very different kinds of event. In Sochiapan Chinantec, the verbs do

vary between ditransitive and transitive frames, but this is not determined by verb semantics; animacy and the completion of events are more important.

2.3.2. Counter-examples

In 2.3.1, I examined languages in which ‘give’ cannot be clearly distinguished from other trivalent verbs on the basis of the transitivity features under scrutiny here. However, such cases do not pose any serious problem for my analysis, since ‘give’ is not outranked in formal transitivity by other trivalent verbs. Real problems arise only in languages in which ‘give’ can be said to rank lower for transitivity in terms of any of the features discussed above. Even though clearly outnumbered by languages with a ditransitive ‘give’, such cases are attested. Two examples are examined below:

Udihe (Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001: 524ff)

(33a) bi sin-du xeleba-wa bu-o:-mi
 me you-DAT bread-ACC give-PAST-1SG
 ‘I gave you (some) bread’

(33b) eni_e sita-i teti-gi:-ni tege-we
 mother son-REF.SS dress-REP-3SG gown-ACC
 xeige-we
 trousers-ACC
 ‘The mother puts a gown and trousers on her son’

(34a) in-ge khajna-n calao-ket'-ta-ko-a
I-FOC rent-1SG.S pay-PAST1:TR-POSS-3PL-FIN
'I paid their rent for them'

(34b) *taŋga-e* *rɛc'-ked-iŋ-a*
 axe-3SG.S take-PAST1:TR-1SG.O-FIN
 ‘He took the axe from me’

(34c) rɛŋgɛʔ-ed-ɪŋ-kan-a daka
be.hungry-PRES:TR-1SG.O-IMPV-FIN food
em-a-ŋ-pe
give-APPL-1SG.O-2PL
'I am hungry, give me food'

In Udihe and Santali, either the argument marking or the verb morphology (respectively) of ‘give’ is less transitive than that associated with certain other trivalent verbs. This means that certain verbs other than ‘give’ can be labelled ditransitive in the sense the term is employed here. They thus counter-exemplify the generalization proposed here. In Udihe, ‘dress’ and ‘teach’ are two of the four verbs that can bear ditransitive (double object) marking (the two others are

‘make, transform sth into sth’ and ‘make somebody grow into somebody’, Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001: 526). ‘Give’ is not capable of this; its Recipient occurs obligatorily in the dative. In terms of argument marking, ‘give’ is thus outranked in transitivity by these four verbs. Similar cases are also attested for example in Malayalam, German, Yawuru and Gbe. In Malayalam (Asher & Kumari 1997: 108, 204f), the verbs ‘entrust with’ and ‘teach’ can occur in a ditransitive frame, while the dative is the case of the Recipient with ‘give’. In German, ‘teach’ (*lehren*) and ‘call someone something’ (*nennen*) allow two objects in the accusative, while this is excluded with ‘give’ (*geben*). In Yawuru, ditransitive constructions are possible in certain external possession constructions, such as ‘she hit me on the head’ (Hosokawa 1991: 433f). Recipients occur in the dative. In Gbe, ‘give’, ‘show’ and ‘teach’ allow dative shift, but it is more typical with ‘show’ and ‘teach’ than with ‘give’ (Enoch Aboh, personal communication). These two verbs are thus more often ditransitive than ‘give’, even though the language does not lack ditransitive ‘give’. Santali in turn illustrates a language in which ‘give’ bears applicative verb morphology, even though the language does have underived ditransitives, as shown above. The case of Santali is very interesting, since even benefactive constructions constitute an unmarked case, while ‘give’ is one of the obligatorily derived ditransitive verbs. Santali therefore illustrates the exact opposite of languages like Chukchi and Southeastern Tepehuan, in which ‘give’ is the only underived ditransitive verb.

A seemingly somewhat different problematic case is found in Saliba (see Margetts 2002), in which ‘give’ and ‘get’ are the only verbs that allow variation between a ditransitive and a transitive trivalent frame. All other trivalent verbs only appear in the ditransitive frame, and should thus be labelled as more transitive than ‘give’, which is in line with assigning ‘give’ a higher transitivity status in languages like Supyire, Koyra Chiini and Malay. What distinguishes ‘give’ from other trivalent verbs in Saliba, however, is that all other verbs in ditransitive frames are derived, while ‘give’ bears no causative affix.

3. On the highly transitive semantics of the event ‘give’

3.1. Introduction

I hope to have shown in section 2 that ‘give’ is by far the most typical ditransitive verb cross-linguistically on the basis of formal features such as argument marking and verb morphology. ‘Give’ can thus be considered more similar to basic transitive verbs than to semi-transitive or extended intransitive verbs. In transitive clauses, semantic and formal transitivity usually agree, which means that semantically highly transitive events are usually encoded by formally transitive constructions. The purpose of the present section is thus to analyse certain three-participant events^{xiii} in terms of features of semantic transitivity, in order to see whether a similar correlation can be established for trivalent

constructions. Semantic transitivity is here largely understood in the spirit of Hopper and Thompson's seminal list of parameters and/or the definitions proposed by Givón (the notion of transitivity is thus to be understood in the present section as a semantic concept, unless otherwise indicated):

	HIGH	LOW
A. PARTICIPANTS	2 or more participants, A and O	1 participant
B. KINESIS	action	non-action
C. ASPECT	telic	atelic
D. PUNCTUALITY	punctual	non-punctual
E. VOLITIONALITY	volitional	non-volitional
F. AFFIRMATION	affirmative	negative
G. MODE	realis	irrealis
H. AGENCY	A high in potency	A low in potency
I. AFFECTEDNESS OF O	O totally affected	O not affected
J. INDIVIDUATION of O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

(Hopper and Thompson 1980: 252)

Semantic definition of transitive event

a. **Agent:** The prototypical transitive clause involves a volitional, controlling, actively-initiating agent who is responsible for the event, thus its **salient cause**.

b. **Patient:** The prototypical transitive event involves a non-volitional, inactive non-controlling patient who registers the event's changes-of-state, thus its **salient effect**.

c. **Verbal modality:** The verb of the prototypical transitive clause codes an event that is *compact* (non-durative), *bounded* (non-lingering), *sequential* (non-perfect) and *realis* (non-hypothetical). The prototypical transitive event is thus fast-paced, completed, real, and **perceptually and/or cognitively salient**. (Givón 1995: 76)

The features considered are largely the same in both definitions, which are based on features relevant to highly transitive two-participant events. This has the consequence that not all of them contribute to semantic transitivity in relation to three-participant events. For example agency, which is one of the most important features of transitivity in general, does not make any contribution to the transitivity of three-participant events. Thus not all of the features listed by Hopper & Thompson and Givón will be considered here. The most relevant of the properties in this regard are the number of participants and whether the event at issue is a single event or rather comprises multiple sub-events construed as one, along with aspects that Givón lists under 'verbal modality'. I begin by discussing the notion of inherent vs. occasional presence of the three participants. I then view the distribution of semantic roles among the participants, and conclude with a discussion of individual transitivity features.

3.2. *“Give” as an event with three core participants*

In principle, any transitive event can involve an additional bene/malefactive or an external causer, and thus yield a three-participant event. However, events differ crucially from each other as regards the way the involvement of each participant is motivated. In the following, I discuss different instances of this.

The presence of the three participants can be regarded as an inherent or occasional property of events (corresponding to the distinction between ‘inherently’ and ‘occasionally’ three-participant events). “Give” clearly constitutes an inherently three-participant event (see e.g. Tuggy 1998: 35), even though it shares common features for example with events involving benefactives; the semantic role assignment is largely the same in the events “he gave me a cake” and “he baked me a cake” (cf. also Shibatani 1996: 173). Likewise events like “throw/kick someone something” share common features with “give”, since they also involve a recipient. However, only with “give” does the number of participants inhere in the nature of the event. This means that the recipient is an integral part of “give”, while the other events are imaginable without any reference to a recipient/benefactive. This has also been pointed out by Shibatani (1996: 164): ‘... neither applicatives nor benefactives are categorically definable in terms of lexical information’ (see also Lehmann et al 2000: 18). The notion of the inherent as opposed to occasional presence of three participants with “give” accounts best for the basic verb morphology of ‘give’

and for the more or less mandatory presence of three arguments attested in such languages as English, German, Spanish, Finnish and Russian. ‘Give’ inherently opens up three argument slots (see also Janda 1998: 262 for Slavic and Newman 1996: 57 in general).

The notion of the inherent presence of three participants, however, does not provide us with any clues as to why ‘give’ should outrank such verbs as ‘send’, ‘show’, ‘buy’ or ‘tell’ in formal transitivity. In principle, all events that inherently involve three participants, such as “buy”, “send” and “show”, parallel “give” with regard to the extremely high status of the recipient. All events of transfer differ in this regard from events that only occasionally involve three participants; for example “send” is not an instance of sending if there is no recipient present at some level of conceptualization. The picture, however, is not this simple and uniform. At some level of conceptualization events like “give”, “send” and “buy” inherently involve three participants, but these events display clear differences with respect to the prominence accorded to the participants. The more plausible the readings without any reference to a recipient, the less integrated this participant is into the event at issue (see also Tuggy (1998: 35), who states that “give” is not imaginable without a recipient, while many other three-participant events are). In what follows, this is further elaborated in the light of three different events: “show”, “send”, and “write a letter”, which will be contrasted with “give”. Only the roles of agent, theme and recipient will be considered here.

“Show” is an event in which an agent presents a thing to a recipient. The basic scheme is thus very similar to “give”. The two events, however, can be distinguished on the basis of how the ‘refusal’ of the recipient affects the semantics of the event. In the case of “give”, recipient can cancel the whole event by refusing to accept the thing offered. As a result, clauses like *?I gave him a book, but he didn’t accept it* are rather infelicitous. The status of the recipient can thus even be regarded as identical to that of the agent with “give”, since both the agent and the recipient can prevent the event from taking place or being completed. In the case of “show”, on the other hand, the recipient can refuse to look at the thing shown; this, however, does affect the basic semantics of “show” in any drastic way. Hence clauses like *the dentist showed the book to the linguist, who didn’t want to look at it* are acceptable (cf. Croft (to appear): 108). The event *per se* is not imaginable without three participants, but unlike “give”, the recipient does not have to complete the event by actually looking at the thing shown. The status of the recipient with regard to the nature of “show” is thus lower than that of the recipient of “give”.

“Send” may be construed as “give with a temporal interval” (see also Waters 1989: 55 and Newman 1999:131). This means that the events “I gave my supervisor a copy of my thesis” and “I sent my supervisor a copy of my thesis” differ from each other primarily in that in the former case the agent and the recipient are in the same location, while in the latter they are not. The basic nature of the two events is in principle identical. In both, an agent transfers a thing to a recipient, which also implies that control over the thing changes. In the case of

“send”, the thing in question is not handed directly to someone; other means are necessary (there are one or more intermediaries, see Newman 1999: 131). As a result, “send” can be regarded as comprising two different stages, that may be separated by a lengthy interval. As a result, the initiation of the event (i.e. “dispatch something”) or even the event as a whole can be considered completed in spite of the fact that the would-be recipient has not received the transferred entity. The recipient may even be completely unaware of the event, and he/she may refuse to accept the transfer. This is far less plausible with “give”, thus making the recipient of “give” more prominent with regard to the nature of the given event.

The last event type under consideration here is “write a letter (to someone)”. This event differs drastically from the other two in that the inherent presence of three participants results from the interaction between the event and its patient. “Write” *per se* does not entail this. Furthermore, the presence of three participants is more conceptual or pragmatic in nature (as opposed to inherent) than in the other two events. The presence of a recipient is not directly determined by the semantics of the event in question, but is merely pragmatically implied. What makes the event of writing a letter involve a recipient is that letters are usually written for a purpose and are usually addressed to someone other than the agent itself (although one can write a letter to oneself). In contrast to “give”, “show” and “send”, however, the basic semantics of the event does not entail the three participants, making explicit reference to recipient fully optional. “Write” is a completed event in its own right.

3.3. Number of participants vs. number of semantic roles

In addition to the obvious differences in the prominence accorded to the participants, three-participant events also differ from each other significantly with regard to whether a participant can bear multiple roles; in other words, there is divergence in the number of semantic roles borne by the participants (the roles of agent, recipient and benefactive will be relevant to the following discussion). “Give” can be regarded as the typical three-participant event in this regard too. “Give” profiles a transfer of a thing from agent to recipient without any further modification. We can even claim that the verb ‘give’ does not have any semantics of its own but merely lexicalizes the basic three-participant event, understood as a relation that involves an agent, a theme and a recipient (there are in fact languages in which ‘give’ does not exist as a lexical verb; see e.g. Roberts (1998) for Amele). Moreover, agent and recipient have to be distinct participants, since “give” typically entails a change in the control/possession of the thing transferred (this is a prerequisite for genuine transfer). This is not possible if the agent is in control of the entity in question prior to the event. Hence agent and recipient have to be referred to by distinct grammatical arguments.^{xiv} “Lend (to someone)” and “send” are to a large extent similar to “give” as regards the distribution of semantic roles. They too imply a transfer of control, which in the former case is only temporary.

Events like “take”, “buy” and “sell” behave differently with regard to the distribution of semantic roles. In “take”, the roles of agent and recipient coincide. The initiator of the event is also the participant that receives the thing transferred; in other words, with “take” the roles of agent and recipient are obligatorily present and are borne by a single participant. This means that the number of participants is two, even though the number of semantic roles is three. “Buy” and “sell” differ from “give” in that they inherently involve four roles. The event “the musician bought a book from the linguist” involves an agent (the musician), a recipient (the musician), a benefactive/source (the linguist) and a theme (the book). In English (and also at least in Swedish, German and Finnish) the Benefactive/Source is freely omissible, which means that three of the four roles are conceptually prominent. However, if nothing else is indicated, the agent is also the recipient of such events as “the musician bought a book”, and the event in question is thus rather similar to “take”. This relation can be modified, as in “the musician bought a book for me” in which case the explicit reference to the ‘external’ recipient entails that the roles of agent and (final) recipient are borne by distinct non-linguistic entities; the number of participants (those relevant to the discussion here) is three, and coincides with the number of semantic roles. Since clauses like *the phonetician gave the book* or *the typologist gave to the boy* are marginal in English (although possible under the right pragmatic conditions), while the likes of *I bought a book* and *I took the book* are perfectly fine, English seems to give more prominence to the number of participants (rather than semantic roles) in the encoding of three-participant events. This has the

consequence that ‘give’ almost mandatorily appears with three arguments, while other trivalent verbs allow the omission of arguments, since an argument can bear multiple roles; thus the event denoted is ‘completed’.

3.4. “Give” as a highly transitive event in the light of individual transitivity features

The discussion thus far has focused on the number of participants and semantic roles in three-participant events. In the remainder of this section, I discuss three-participant events from the viewpoint of individual transitivity features, in the spirit of Hopper and Thompson and of Givón (cf. above).

One feature of high semantic transitivity that has already been touched upon with regard to the difference between “give” and “send” is the inseparability of events. This is highly relevant to transitivity in general. For example, direct causation in the case of “break” or “kill” is construed as more transitive than indirect causation (see e.g. DeLancey 1984). In the former case, the contiguity of time and place is so strong that it is quite difficult to divide the given event into meaningful components (such as the phases of initiation and ‘affectedness’). On the other hand, the two phases of an indirectly caused event can be separated. An example can be provided by indirect killing, in which someone happens to cause someone’s death by cutting the telephone wires so that no help can be called in case of emergency. The interval between the ‘initiation’ and the affectedness or completion phase can be very long. As regards the

indistinguishability of events, “give” is more similar to direct than to indirect causation, and thus displays highly transitive traits. First of all, “give” is an unambiguously single event with three participants. It is not meaningfully possible to distinguish the initiation from the completion of the event, since all three participants need to be ‘activated’ at the same time. A non-linguistic occurrence is regarded as an act of giving only when the recipient has completed it by accepting the thing transferred. This also means that the act by the agent is construed as part of a giving event only if the recipient completes the event in the desired way. Prior to this, no giving has occurred. Similarly, events like “break” or “kill” are regarded as instances of the relevant event types only when the patient has been affected. This naturally implies a close temporal interval between the two phases. This feature clearly distinguishes “give” from causativized transitives, and from benefactives that comprise two distinguishable phases. Events like “send” and “buy for someone” are also different in this respect, since they can be thought of as two distinct events conceived of as one (cf. above). “Give”, on the other hand, does not involve a giving phase and a receiving phase; the event is conceptualized as a whole.

In addition to being single events with spatiotemporally closely related subparts, highly transitive events also need to be successfully completed. In a number of languages, less than perfectly completed events are thus less transitively marked. For example in Finnish this is manifested in the accusative vs. partitive variation. In a similar vein, events that have failed to occur are described by formally less transitive clauses. In this regard too, “give” displays

traits of high transitivity. Since there is no giving without a recipient, “give” is inherently related to a successful completion. “Give” entails that the recipient gains control over the thing transferred. This distinguishes “give” from “send” and “buy” (the latter with a recipient other than the agent him/herself), since the events can be thought of as successfully completed even if the recipient refuses to accept the thing transferred.

Successful completion of events is closely related to the affectedness parameter, which also contributes to the high semantic transitivity of “give”. Since “give” indicates that the recipient actually receives the transferred thing, it is also understandable that it indicates direct affectedness; the location of the thing transferred or control over it need to be different before and after the event (see also Newman 1999: 133). This feature of high transitivity is manifest for example in Zulu, in which the use of ditransitive constructions requires that the recipient be directly affected (the following discussion, unless otherwise indicated, concerns only Zulu and is based on the analysis proposed by Taylor in his 1998 paper). The act by the agent and the affectedness of the recipient also have to be simultaneous. The notion of direct affectedness is more important in this respect than the resulting possessive relation. What is further interesting is that this semantic restriction only holds for genuine (non-extended) ditransitive verbs, like ‘give’, ‘tell’, ‘rob’ and ‘take away (from)’. Applicatives do not imply direct affectedness, nor does the affectedness need to overlap temporally with the agent’s action. This also mirrors the higher transitivity of “give” (along with certain other non-extended ditransitives) in comparison with derived

ditransitives. In Zulu, the semantic transitivity of these constructions is lower than that of their underived equivalents. Dutch, Sochiapan Chinantec and English are further examples of languages in which the affectedness parameter is relevant with respect to the constructions in which trivalent verbs occur. In Dutch, the use of ditransitive constructions implies that the event of giving somehow concerns the recipient, while transitive trivalent constructions are neutral in this respect and merely indicate that the action has someone as its destination (Janssen 1998: 281). In Sochiapan Chinantec, the verb ‘give’ can also appear in both a ditransitive and a transitive trivalent frame. The former indicates permanent and completed acts of giving, while the latter has the meaning ‘entrust with’ (see Foris 1998: 213). In English too the affectedness parameter is important, since clauses like *he baked me a cake* or *he threw me a ball* are fully grammatical, while the likes of **he threw the yard a ball* or **he drove Chicago a man* are not, even though the latter are ‘derived’ from the same N-V-N-to N-pattern as *he threw me a ball*. In the latter two cases the recipient is not seen as affected, making the use of ditransitive constructions ungrammatical (cf. the differences in grammaticality between *this bed has been slept in by George Washington* vs. **Chicago has been slept in by George Washington*).

4. Summary and conclusions

This paper has dealt with the formally ditransitive nature of ‘give’ attested in a number of languages, in addition to which the high semantic transitivity of the event “give” has also been discussed. The purpose of the paper has been to show that the formal anomaly associated with ‘give’ can be explained by its high degree of formal transitivity. The proposed analysis is supported by a number of morpho-syntactic properties, as illustrated in section 2. ‘Give’ is for example the most frequent verb that appears in a double object frame or that bears the basic verb morphology, if the language has both derived and underived ditransitive verbs. In this section I propose some universals based on the data examined in section 2, and suggest certain possible topics for future studies of ‘give’ and trivalent verbs in more general terms. It should be noted that the universals proposed in the following are not based on a detailed study of all the relevant features of formal transitivity in all the languages in my sample; this in fact would not be possible, since some of the relevant features are simply not discussed in the sources. The reason for illustrating the findings of the paper in the form of universals is to make it easier for other linguists to search for either counterexamples or confirming evidence.

To begin with, it has to be said that even though ‘give’ is cross-linguistically by far the most typical ditransitive verb, there are too many counterexamples to the universal that ‘give’ invariably belongs to the ditransitive verb class in those cases where a language displays variation between ditransitive

and transitive trivalent verbs. This constitutes a very strong cross-linguistic tendency, but it is not a universal. There is, however, a universal rather closely related to this, which can be formulated as follows:

Universal 1: If a language has only one ditransitive trivalent verb
(on the basis of any feature of formal transitivity), then that verb is
'give'.

This universal seems exceptionless. The universal does not say that 'give' always belongs to the class of ditransitive verbs in a language, since as shown in section 2.3.2 there are exceptions. However, in all the languages discussed in 2.3.2, there are at least two verbs that pattern ditransitively; Udihe has four such verbs, German, Malayalam and Gbe two, while Santali and Yawuru have a wide range of ditransitive verbs/constructions. On the other hand, there are numerous languages in which only 'give' is accorded ditransitive status. Examples include Maltese, Walmatjari, Djaru, Waray, Chukchi, Swahili, Kiha, Amele, Southeastern Tepehuan, Koyra Chiini, Supyire, Malay, Kanuri, Tiwi, Imonda, Pitjantjatjara, Tigrinya and Maltese. In Walmatjari, Djaru, Pitjantjatjara and Waray, the division is based on argument marking. In these languages, 'give' is the only trivalent verb that (potentially) appears in a ditransitive frame. For example in Pitjantjatjara (Bowe 1990: 25) 'say' and 'tell' can also occur in the ditransitive ERG-ABS-ABS-frame, but in contrast to 'give' they also allow the Recipient to appear in the locative. In Chukchi, Swahili, Kiha, Southeastern

Tepehuan, Olutec and Kanuri (for the latter, see Hutchison 1981: 136) ‘give’ is the only non-extended ditransitive verb, i.e. only this verb bears basic verb morphology. In Malay, Koyra Chiini and Supyire ‘give’ is the only trivalent verb that allows dative shift, while in Tigrinya only ‘give’ allows both the Theme and the Recipient to be promoted to the subject of passive. In Maltese, a combination of different features enables a strict division between ditransitive ‘give’ and other trivalent verbs.

The second universal to be drawn concerns dative shift. There are many languages with a dative shift similar to English. On the basis of the data in my sample, I can propose the following universal:

Universal 2: If a language has a morpho-syntactic operation like the dative shift, which optionally promotes the Recipient to direct object status, then ‘give’ is in the class of verbs that allow this.

Universal 2 states that in languages with optionally ditransitive verbs, ‘give’ is always a member of this verb class. Examples include Malay, Indonesian, Koyra Chiini, Supyire, Lunda-Ndembu, English, Dutch, Swedish, Gbe (Enoch Aboh, personal communication) and Hoava (see Davis 2003: 193).

The third universal is very closely related to universal 2, and can also be seen as the obverse of Universal 2:

Universal 3: If a language allows the Recipient to be removed from the clause core (typically from a ditransitive frame), and the variation is restricted to certain verbs only, then ‘give’ is not in this class.

Universal 3 refers to languages like Pitjantjatjara, in which ‘give’ obligatorily appears in a ditransitive frame, while other trivalent verbs permit the Recipient to bear a marking distinct from the direct object. Further examples of languages of this kind include Icelandic (Johanna Barðdal, personal communication), Martuthunira and Chamorro (see Gibson 1980: 34, 153, cited in Newman 1996: 20f).

Likewise with regard to passivization and verbal cross-referencing, ‘give’ seems to be without exception a formally highly transitive verb. The following universals can be formulated:

Universal 4: If the trivalent verbs of a language show variation with regard to the passivization of their objects, then ‘give’ is in the class of verbs that allow the promotion of both objects to the subject of passive.

Universal 5: If a language displays variation in the number or nature of cross-referencing affixes with trivalent verbs, and the variation is related to differences in formal transitivity, then the

cross-referencing of ‘give’ is formally more transitive than that of other trivalent verbs.

Universal 4 is based on only three languages (Tigrinya, Maltese and Martuthunira), and a closer investigation of languages may necessitate revisions. Universal 5 is supported by such languages as Barai, Kalkatungu, Imonda, Maltese, Tiwi and Yawuru.

Universals 1-5 seem exceptionless on the basis of data in my sample, which does not mean of course that a more careful study of other languages would not make revisions necessary. One near-universal can also be formulated:

(Near-)Universal 6: If a language has both derived and underived ditransitive verbs, then ‘give’ is in the class of underived ditransitive verbs.

As noted, universal 6 is not without exception, since there is at least one language (Santali) that counterexemplifies it. The tendency, however, is very strong for ‘give’ to bear basic verb morphology, while at least a number of other trivalent verbs bear an applicative affix if used ditransitively (if there is variation in this regard).

As these universals imply, the features examined in the present paper can be ranked in terms of how clearly they allow a distinction between ‘give’ and other trivalent verbs. Passivization, verbal cross-referencing and dative shift

seem to be the most unequivocal properties of formal ditransitivity. If a language allows both objects to be promoted to the subject of the passive only in the case of certain trivalent verbs, ‘give’ is always among these verbs. In a similar vein, the verbal cross-referencing of ‘give’ is always more transitive than that of certain other trivalent verbs, if there is variation in this regard. The same holds true for dative shift; I have not come across a single language with a dative shift in which ‘give’ does not allow this. On the other hand, double object frames seem to be attested with other verbs (or in other constructions) than ‘give’ in more than one or two languages. What is perhaps noteworthy in this context is that ‘teach’ is such a verb at least in German, Malayalam, Gbe and Udihe. The more frequent occurrence of double object frames with verbs other than ‘give’ may simply follow from the fact that double object marking seems to be cross-linguistically the most frequent manifestation of ditransitivity; thus the number of languages that violate the cross-linguistic tendency of high formal transitivity of ‘give’ is higher.

The present paper has hopefully also succeeded in showing that it is not the mere frequency of occurrence that underlies the anomaly associated with ‘give’. Frequency of occurrence does contribute very significantly to the anomaly of many linguistic elements. We may for example say that the irregular verbs of a language are usually (always?) among the ones most frequently used. However, if the anomaly followed exclusively from this feature, we would expect there to be more languages in which ‘give’ ranked lower in formal transitivity. There is no valid reason to assume that mere frequency of occurrence

always produces verbs that are formally more transitive than verbs of lower frequency, and the distribution of formally more and less transitive ‘give’ should therefore be much closer to 50-50 if the peculiar nature of ‘give’ could be explained merely in terms of frequency of occurrence. Thus from this point of view too the transitivity-based explanation proposed here seems to hold.

This paper has dealt with the ditransitive vs. transitive nature of trivalent verbs as a dichotomy. This means that the features examined have been contrasted to each other one at a time. I have likewise not tried to rank different realizations of ditransitivity on the basis of the degree of ditransitivity they display. This means that I have not tried to rank trivalent verbs appearing in a ditransitive frame and those with unmarked verb morphology or those allowing dative shift on the basis of their transitivity. All of these have been accorded the same status in the present context. On the other hand, it is relatively easy to say that a double object frame in a given language shows more traits of formal transitivity than a transitive trivalent frame with an additional adjunct in the same language, while it is much harder to justify similar rankings across languages. This is why I have confined the examination within languages and to one feature at a time. I look forward eagerly to studies that undertake this most challenging task. Another property that needs to be studied in more detail is the contribution of other features, such as animacy, to the variation between ditransitive and transitive trivalent verbs across languages.

The primary goal of the present paper has been to present the formal transitivity related to ‘give’. In addition, I have tried to account for the formal

transitivity of ‘give’ by the high semantic transitivity associated with the event “give”. Certain semantic features that contribute to the highly transitive nature of ‘give’ were therefore discussed in section 3. The goal was to show that in the light of certain transitivity-related semantic properties, “give” can be construed as more similar to typical transitive events than other three-participant events. As regards the high transitivity of “give”, one of the central factors is that “give” is conceived of as a single event. Furthermore, in many languages “give” implies that the event is completed (otherwise the verb ‘give’ cannot appear in a ditransitive frame). This feature is very relevant to high transitivity in general, and coincides directly with the semantics of “give”. Moreover, ditransitive ‘give’ implies direct or salient affectedness in such languages as Zulu, Dutch and Sochiapan Chinantec.

ABBREVIATIONS

A	Agent of a transitive clause	EPENTH	Epenthetic vowel
		ERG	Ergative
ABL	Ablative case	EXCL	Exclusive
ABS	Absolutive	FA	Factitive
ACC	Accusative	F/FEM	Feminine
ALL	Allative case	FIN	Finite
ANIM	Animate	FOC	Focus
AOR	Aorist	FUT	Future tense
APPL	Applicative	GEN	Genitive
ASP	Aspect	IMP	Imperative
ATR	Attributive	IMPFV	Imperfective
BEN	Benefactive	IND	Indicative mood
BP	Body part	INDEF	Indefinite
C	Catalyst	INSTR	Instrumental
CAUS	Causative	IRR	Irrealis
CLR	Clarification	LAT	Lative
D/DAT	Dative	LOC	Locative
DEF	Definite	LOCALL	Locative-allative
DISTPAST	Distant past	LOCDIR	Locative-directional
DO	Direct object	M/MASC	Masculine
EMP	Emphasis	NARR	Narrative

NC	Non-complete	O	Patient of a transitive
NEG	Negation		clause
NF	Non-feminine	OBJ	Object
NOM	Nominative	OBL	Oblique
NONFUT	Non-future	PASS	Passive
PAST	Past tense	REM	Remote past
PAT	Patient	REP	Repetitive
PE	Perceived evidence	REU	Reported evidence
PERF/PF	Perfective		unknown
PI	Past imperfective	S	Subject (of an
PL	Plural		intransitive clause)
POSS	Possessive	SG	Singular
PREP	Preposition	SU	Subject
PRES	Present tense	T	Theme of a
PRET	Preterite		ditransitive verb
Q	Question	TR	Transitive
R/REDUP	Reduplication	TWD	Toward
REC	Recipient	XY	Verb class
REC.NON	Zero realization of		(Burushaski)
	the Recipient	Y	Verb class
REC.PAST	Recent past		(Burushaski)
REFL	Reflexive		

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i. I am very grateful to the two anonymous referees of 'Linguistics' for their invaluable comments on the earlier version of the paper. They had really put a lot of effort to making this paper publishable.

ii. As is typical in cross-linguistic studies concerned with the syntax/semantics interface, entities in single inverted commas (e.g. 'give') refer to verbs or clauses in a language expressing the meaning in question (like the event 'give'), while italics are used for actual linguistic data from a language.

iii. Throughout the paper, 'give' is used in the canonical sense in reference to an event with a human (or higher animate) agent, an inanimate entity transferred, and a human (or a higher animate) recipient. Figurative uses of 'give' (see e.g. Newman 1996:133ff) are excluded.

iv. A terminological note is in order here. In the present paper, the term ‘object’ refers in general to both Theme and Recipient of a trivalent construction. Only if the marking of the two objects is different, or if the distinction between them has to be highlighted for some other reason, will the labels Theme and Recipient be used. Theme refers to the thing transferred in a three-participant event, while Recipient encodes the participant that receives the theme. Capitals indicate grammatical roles, while their absence indicates semantic roles.

v. The morphological analysis of the last two examples is not from Borg & Comrie, and I thus take the whole responsibility for any errors in the data.

vi. There is also a periphrastic passive that only promotes the Theme; cf. Borg & Comrie 1984:119.

vii. I have opted for using the ‘traditional’ labels ‘subject’ and ‘direct object’ in reference to the two arguments of a basic transitive clause (the latter is defined as the linguistic encoding of such events as ‘the man painted the house’ or ‘the child broke the cup’). Another option would have been to use the labels ‘Agent’ and ‘Patient’, but it seems odd for a clause to have two Patients, while having two direct objects is normal. The traditional use of the labels also implies that the objects of trivalent constructions will not be classified according to whether they are direct or primary, in spirit of Dryer (1986).

viii. Also ‘give’ allows the pattern in (9b), but it seems that only it can pattern ditransitively.

ix. I have not taken account of obvious transitive benefactive constructions, like *he built a house for me*, since Benefactives are always optional parts of clauses and can thus be freely omitted, even though the marking of the Recipient of ‘give’ and a Benefactive can be identical, as is the case for example in Finnish, Hungarian, German and Basque.

x. I thank the following people for answering my question on the acceptability of the relevant clauses: Michaela Pörn (Swedish), Katja Gruzdeva (Russian), Åshild Naess (Norwegian), Pilar Valenzuela (Spanish and Shipibo-Konibo), Bertil Tikkanen (Hindi), Lotta Harjula (Swahili and Kiha), Nobufumi Inaba (Japanese), Soon-Mi Hong-Schunka (Korean) and Magdolna Kovács (Hungarian).

xi. Verbal cross-referencing can also be thought of as an additional mechanism of argument marking; since, however, it occurs in the verb, it is discussed here.

xii. As used here, the label comprises all possible ways of encoding recipients, sources and benefactives.

xiii. Events are here understood simply as language independent conceptualizations or abstractions of non-linguistic occurrences. Each language may choose to emphasize different aspects of the same events, which does not affect their basic semantics. The usage is largely the same as that adopted by Givón in his definition below. It is also worth emphasizing that events are referred to in this section using double quotes, in order to explicitly distinguish them from verbs, which are referred to by using single quotes. This difference is of the utmost importance for the discussion in the present section.

xiv. See also Haiman 1981:354 for Hua, in which dative shift is possible only if the benefactive is not co-referential with the agent.